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ABSTRACT

In this survey of alternative public high school programs in New York City, the Community Service Society (CSS) explored the reasons for establishing alternative programs in New York City high schools. It also examined the following: 1) the characteristics of the population these programs were serving, 2) how the programs were planned to meet the needs of this population, 3) how staff was selected, 4) what effects the schools were having, 5) how they were being evaluated, 6) and how they were perceived within the larger educational system. CSS was also interested in determining to what extent the alternative schools in New York matched the philosophical concept of alternative education: that of providing options, diversity, and free choice for students with different learning needs, different learning styles, and different interests. From the observations made at the schools and the analysis of available data in this informal exploration of alternative high schools in N.Y.C., it appears that providing alternatives serves a valid purpose and affords a valuable experience for students. While the schools vary widely in goals, organizational structure and programming, they do have some common elements: 1) freedom from bureaucratic restrictions, 2) emphasis on individual development, 3) extensive use of outside resources to enrich the learning experience, and 4) a high degree of student satisfaction. (Author/AM)

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ANOTHER CHOICE - ANOTHER CHANCE

A Survey of Alternative Public High School Programs in New York City

Prepared for the
Committee on Education
by
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VDO 173511

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PREFACE

The study described in this report was undertaken in the 1974-75 school year, prior to the severe cuts in school budgets which were prompted by New York City's fiscal crisis. Some of the programs in effect at that time have since been eliminated and the students who had enjoyed the advantages of a small size school, responsive to their needs, have been reassigned to the larger, overcrowded, conventional schools and an unpredictable future.

The Community Service Society had begun to examine alternative education in New York City in 1972. Its interest was spurred by several developments. The Fleischmann Commission Report on the Quality, Cost, and Financing of Elementary and Secondary Education in New York State had called for a fundamental reorganization of the State's secondary schools and recommended, among other things, alternative schools that are not organized along traditional lines. There was a growing awareness of the need to create a more flexible system to meet the changing needs of a changing student population.

The earliest response to this need had been developed by the private sector -- the street academies which had been established with corporate funds. The proliferation of such programs focused attention on the problems which precipitated the alternative school movement. These schools were demonstrating success in recruiting high school dropouts and in motivating them to continue their education in a different setting, providing new opportunities for those who wanted or required a different approach from the traditional system and a more individualized program. They served as catalytic agents in forcing change within the public school system. The Board of

Education was encouraged to establish its own alternative school programs. At the same time, the State Education Department was formulating guidelines for "responsible" experimentation with new learning forms.

In 1972 and 1973, members of the CSS Committee on Education visited several of the privately funded alternative high schools, including Harlem Prep, and were impressed by the enthusiasm of both students and staff and by their record of college placement. But these schools were finding it increasingly difficult to raise the private funds to maintain and continue their programs. In the fall of 1973, CSS presented testimony at a Board of Education hearing in support of the absorption of Harlem Prep into the City school system, with guarantees that it be permitted to pursue its independent, unconventional program and to retain its administrative and teaching staff which were so critical to that program. With the support of the Chancellor, the Board of Education approved such a resolution.

Educational options take many forms, and CSS then turned its attention to the existing and emerging programs in bilingual education, another alternative to the traditional methodology in education. In 1973 and 1974 CSS published reports of its studies of programs for children with English language difficulty in New York City public schools.

In the interim, a growing number of the City's high schools had begun to establish mini-schools and the concept of alternative public educational programs was spreading across the nation. A survey conducted by the National School Boards Association in 1975 concluded that this concept "is definitely not on the fringe of American public school activity; it is an important part of the program in many school districts and its significance is growing."

The NSBA's recently published "Research Report: Alternative Schools" states that "options within public school systems exemplify lay control at its best. They make clear that local boards seek to provide what is best for the members of each community." The NSBA reports that 14 percent of the nation's school systems have approved policy statements that establish the right of students or parents to choose programs.

In initiating the herein-described study in 1974, CSS undertook to explore the reasons for establishing alternative programs in New York City high schools, to examine the characteristics of the population they were serving, how the programs were planned to meet the needs of this population, how staff was selected, what effect the schools were having, how they were being evaluated, and how they were perceived within the larger educational system. And finally, CSS was interested in determining to what extent the alternative schools in this City matched the philosophical concept of alternative education: that of providing options, diversity and free choice for students with different learning needs, different learning styles, and different interests.

This survey of alternative schools and the insights gained would not have been possible without the cooperation of the principals, directors, teachers, streetworkers, and students who so freely shared their experiences. The dedication of so many, in spite of severe frustrations suffered daily, has been extremely impressive to CSS Committee members and staff.

CSS is grateful to all, including those who were not contacted personally, but, nonetheless, took time from their heavy schedules to respond to the questionnaires.

RATIONALE FOR SURVEY

Concern about the much publicized statistics regarding low achievement and the alarming dropout and truant rate in New York City's public high schools prompted the Community Service Society to undertake this study of alternative schools. The problems are not particular to New York City but are, in fact, national in scope. According to figures compiled by the National Commission on the Reform of Secondary Education "average daily attendance as a percentage of enrollment runs as low as 45 percent in some urban schools."[1] While few of New York City's schools approach this alarming figure of failure, the problem is serious enough to warrant the public's concern. If today's youth are not being educated to live productive and independent lives with some measure of ability to control their destiny, then the quality of life in the City will be adversely affected.

A study of the literature available revealed that many of the alternative schools had evolved because the larger traditional school structure was not responsive to the differing needs of many students who found the school climate oppressive and the curriculum dull. While various community and educational groups reacted by designing and establishing innovative alternative high schools, other types of optional programs were also developed for those students who had become the dropouts, truants and cutters. Since many alternative programs had been established to serve this latter group of students, CSS embarked on this study to find out what progress had been made, and which methods and organizational patterns could possibly be recommended

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[1] National Commission on the Reform of Secondary Education, The Reform of Secondary Education, McGraw Hill, 1973.

for replication in the larger schools. It was decided that improved attendance would not be the sole measure of success but would serve as one indicator along with other factors within the school.

Another matter of concern to CSS was whether alternative schools (particularly mini-schools within a larger school) were being established as "dumping grounds" for students. This concern is also expressed in the report of the National Commission on the Reform of Secondary Education:

> Unless vigorous precautions are taken to keep all alternative schools fully representative of the diversity of the population, a system of alternative schools could easily become an apartheid system fractured on lines of race, social caste, economic class, or culture.[2]

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[2]Ibid.

WHAT IS AN ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL?

Alternative schools, as the term implies, provide for freedom of choice, and they are different from the existing high schools in size, organizational structure and curriculum. They are generally smaller, more flexible, more informal and more attuned to the individual development of their students than the conventional school. Many of the failures and successes of the alternative schools relate very specifically to their organizational patterns. For the purposes of this study, the types of alternative high schools in the City's public system are defined as follows:

School Within a School, Mini-School - a school which organizationally belongs to a parent school but is designed to meet the special individual needs of selected students. Such a school may be located either within the main school building or at a different site, but is considered a separate school.

School Without Walls - a school which has a resource center and offers basic instruction as needed, but which utilizes the community's (city's) cultural, business and occupational facilities as educational centers.

Mini-School Complex - a school composed of several mini-schools, each operating as a separate entity and designed to meet particular interest needs (Creative Arts, English as a Second Language, College Bound, etc.).

Experimental Alternative High School - a school which, from its conception, is autonomous in its organization and operation and which occupies its own building. There is a spectrum of organizational patterns within this category.

Street Academy - a school structured primarily for dropout (and usually older) students.

It should be noted that few of the schools fall neatly into one category.

BACKGROUND

History

The alternative high school movement is a relatively new development in public education, having gained its impetus from the turmoil and dissatisfaction of the sixties and the alienation that many young (and some not so young) people felt toward established bureaucratic institutions. The high schools became focal points of this alienation, as many young people rebelled against anything they perceived as irrelevant and meaningless.

During that time "free schools" emerged. These schools were generally private, small and short-lived, but they were an important part of what Vernon H. Smith refers to as "The Quiet Revolution."[3]

Although most alternative schools were founded initially as a reaction to unresponsive institutions, their proliferation in the past six years is nothing short of an educational revolution.

According to one source, Robert D. Barr, there are now about 1,250 alternative schools in the country. This figure may well be a low estimate; it was based on information gathered at conferences and from news items, directories and the like. On the basis of these admittedly inadequate data, Barr stated that in 1973 alternative schools "had been identified in 35 different states and five countries, with 75% of the schools being found in eight states. Over 40% of the alternative schools were found in California, Washington and

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[3]Vernon H. Smith, "Options in Public Education: The Quiet Revolution," Phi Delta Kappan, March 1973, pp. 434-437.

New York."[4] Obviously there must be a reason for the large increase in the number of "followers" of this movement.

The characteristics of the young people themselves may have been crucial in achieving acceptance of alternative ways of learning. Ewald Nyquist, Commissioner of Education of the State of New York, describes the differences between them and their parents:

> Today's young people mature earlier, are better prepared academically and are more sophisticated than the youth of previous generations. Physiological comparisons show that youngsters in this country attain full growth sooner and reach puberty considerably earlier than their counterparts of 50 years ago...
>
> There are many reasons for this. Teachers have more formal training; better quality textbooks and study guides are now available along with inexpensive paperback books; cultural events are offered more frequently and more conveniently; and the introduction of instructional technology has given students new opportunities to reinforce what they have been studying in class. These changes have been accompanied by new forms of learning experiences outside the classroom, such as summer camp programs oriented to the arts and languages, plus influences like travel and television.[5]

These, along with many other factors in the total society, have had significant influence on the outlook of the students. It is no wonder that they questioned and rebelled against enforced routines that their parents accepted without question. Yet, to quote Nyquist further, "Despite all the changes in how and where people learn, however, the educational structure remains basically the same."

The Changing Population of Urban Schools

In New York City, as in other urban centers, the public school population has changed markedly in the past decade. The outward movement of the white middle class to the suburbs has reversed the racial and ethnic distribution in

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[4]Robert D. Barr, "The Growth of Alternative Public Schools," Changing Schools, No. 12, 3:4, 1975, pp. 2-3.

[5]New York State Education Department, A Catalog of Optional Learning Environments in New York State Schools, Albany, New York: May 1974, p. iv.

public school enrollment, which is now two-thirds black and Hispanic. The percentage of children eligible for free lunch, a poverty indicator, has doubled in less than a decade and now exceeds 50 percent. Achievement levels in the basic skills of reading and mathematics, as measured by standardized examinations, have fallen steadily, though there appears to be some indication that this trend is beginning to reverse (shown by scores on the State Education Department Pupil Evaluation Program tests).

There has also been a steady increase in the percentage of high school dropouts, in school crime, in student suspensions (up 250 percent in the high schools since 1969), and in truancy. Simultaneously, the job market for inner-city youth continues to shrink, resulting in a teenage unemployment rate which far outstrips that for adults. This situation has been described as "intolerable" by former Secretary of Labor, W. Willard Wirtz, who now heads the National Manpower Institute.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the national jobless rate for black teenagers (between the ages of 16 and 19) has exceeded 40 percent; other sources cited by James S. Tinney suggest that joblessness among minority teenagers in major cities is somewhere between 60 and 70 percent.[6]

Tinney links this problem to the school problem. He states: "The direct effect on the educational scene is also seen in the growing teenage dropouts."

The same theme is emphasized by Charles V. Hamilton, urban analyst at Columbia University, who said, "These youngsters don't see the relationship between the process of education and the end result of getting a decent job. They short-circuit it, because even with education, they are not going to have an 'open sesame'."[7]

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[6]James S. Tinney, "The Effects of Unemployment on Youth, Encore American and Worldwide News, April 19, 1976.

[7]Congressional Record, May 6, 1976, S6676.

Dropouts

The Bureau of Attendance of the New York City Board of Education prepares an "Annual City-Wide Report on Dropouts for Public Academic and Vocational High Schools," which shows changes in registers and number of dropouts for a ten-year period. According to the Bureau's analysis, the percentage of high school dropouts has increased from 11.11 percent in 1964-65 (27,141 dropouts from a total high school register of 244,335) to 13.0 percent in 1974-75 (40,653 dropouts from a total of 308,003 on register). These figures include only the 9th grades of senior high schools, and not 9th grades of junior high schools; therefore, they do not present a full picture of the dropout rate. Moreover, the report compares the number of students dropping out in a given year with the total high school enrollment in the same year, rather than providing a longitudinal analysis.

CSS obtained from the Bureau of Attendance the total 9th grade enrollment in New York City public schools for 1971-72 and the enrollment in succeeding years as these youngsters would move through the high school grades.

As tabulated below, these figures show a "dropout" rate of 42.6 percent.

TABLE 1.

ENROLLMENT BY GRADE (9-12) IN A FOUR YEAR PERIOD*
(New York City Public Schools)

9th grade enrollment	1971-72	101,040
10th grade enrollment	1972-73	100,588
11th grade enrollment	1973-74	78,554
12th grade enrollment	1974-75	57,967

Of the entering 9th grade, 42.6 percent (43,073 students) no longer appeared on the school rolls in the 12th grade three years later. Some of these "dropouts" may have left school for employment; some may have graduated

*Data supplied by Bureau of Attendance.

from summer school or evening high school; and some may have moved out of the City; but there is no data available to suggest how many fall into these categories. The Bureau of Attendance report shows that the vast majority of high school dropouts (80 percent of the total) are over 17 years old (past the age of compulsory attendance).

It is likely that the problems of these youngsters started long before they reached the high school level. For them, an alternative high school might have been a "last chance."

Limited Options Available

The system, large as it is in New York City, offers a variety of programs and courses. Some of the specialized vocational schools, such as the High School of Art and Design and of Fashion Industries, The New York School of Printing, and Aviation High School, receive more applicants than they can accept. The specialized academic high schools - Stuyvesant High School, Bronx High School of Science, Brooklyn Technical and Music and Art High School - are highly selective schools for students with special talent.

Other high schools have developed special programs to attract students with recognized talents and achievements. And cooperative work-study programs are yet another option in the large city schools. Finally, there are the diverse independent alternative schools.

But no options exist for half the students who enter high school in New York City. For most students feeder patterns determine which of the large general high schools they will attend and the course of study is prescribed, whether or not it "fits" the student. Having suffered repeated failure or boredom in the lower schools, feeling unwanted, alienated, uninvolved and anonymous, thousands drop out, without having developed the competence and skills which are essential to a productive and functioning citizenry.

METHODOLOGY

The first step in the CSS survey was to identify the alternative public high schools. Although only twelve are listed by the Board of Education as alternative high schools in the Bureau of Attendance tables, these tables do not identify mini-schools as such, nor do they list all of the schools which properly merit the designation "alternative."

Of those identified, forty-two were contacted and the patterns of attendance were compared between the regular high schools and the alternative schools.

Analysis of Attendance

The Board of Education's high school attendance figures for the period March 3 - 26, 1975 are shown in a table in Appendix A. Academic and vocational schools are indicated by a code (X and V respectively). Twelve alternative high schools are grouped together without reference to their borough location. The specialized high schools, e.g., schools in which enrollment is based on highly competitive tests, are not given a special code on this particular form. However, in the following analysis of these attendance figures the specialized academic high schools were separated from the other academic high schools in order that a more accurate comparison could be made.

TABLE 2

HIGH SCHOOL AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE (in Percents)
New York City, March 1975

Borough	General Academic	Vocational	Special Academic	Total Percentage
Bronx	73.8	82.3	90.4	76.8
Brooklyn	76.8*	83.5	88.8	79.0
Manhattan	79.6	80.6	90.2	78.6
Queens	84.4	89.8	----	85.1
Staten Island**	82.7	81.0	----	82.4
Alternatives***	----	----	----	64.9

From these percentages several points can be made: the averages of the specialized high schools bring up the averages in their respective boroughs; the specialized and vocational schools have better daily attendance figures than do the general academic; although Queens and Staten Island do not have specialized high schools, they have better attendance averages than the other three boroughs; and attendance at the alternative schools does not, at first glance, seem very impressive.

Referring again to Appendix A, the disparity in attendance between Queens and Bronx high schools is marked: in Queens, where there are 20 general academic schools, only one has an attendance figure lower than 80 percent

*Attendance figures for general academic high schools in Brooklyn include those of the "Experimental High Schools" as defined in our study. Attendance at these schools averages over 87 percent.

**While the Board of Education table combines Brooklyn and Staten Island schools, they are separated here for clarity.

***The alternative schools listed are not identified by location. The percentages of attendance in the alternative schools range from 39 percent to 83 percent.

(79.10) while in the Bronx only one school out of 13 (excluding Bronx High School of Science) has a figure over 80 percent (81.39).

The high rate of attendance at the vocational schools could be caused by the fact that the students see the education they are receiving as having practical application to real life experience and careers. The same could be said for the specialized high schools where the students are highly motivated by their special interests and by a strong desire to be accepted into college. While the attendance rate is generally lower for schools which the Board of Education lists as alternative high schools in Appendix A, it should be noted that these schools are often populated by students who previously were hard-core dropouts, truants or "cutters."

However, there are also general academic high schools with poor attendance rates, most of which are located in the Bronx, Brooklyn and Manhattan. For example, Benjamin Franklin in Manhattan has an attendance rate of 49 percent compared to the city-wide average of 77 percent.

Nevertheless, in view of the large size of the high school population, (using the total enrollment figure of 308,003*), and even with an attendance rate of 77 percent (Appendix A), the fact remains that 70,841 young people of high school age are not in attendance on an average school day. The seriousness of this problem cannot be minimized.

Other Data Gathering

To obtain information from as many alternative schools as possible, two questionnaires were constructed (Appendices B1 and B2). One sought information about the organizational characteristics, ethnic population, attendance, etc.; and the other, information about teachers. In order to insure privacy, the "Teacher Profile" questionnaire did not require any identification of person

*Taken from Annual City-Wide Report of Bureau of Attendance, Board of Education as of October 31, 1974.

or school. CSS requested and received permission from the Office of High Schools to conduct the survey (Appendices B3 and B4) in the spring of 1975. Additional information was thereafter obtained by on-site observations and interviews with directors, staff members, and students. Nineteen of the 42 schools contacted responded to the questionnaires. On-site visits were made to nine schools; at least two visits were made to each school. The nine schools visited included three types of alternatives (mini-complex, experimental alternative schools and mini-schools) and were located in four of the five boroughs. Street academies were not included in this study.

THE MINI-SCHOOL COMPLEX

As the name suggests, this is a group of nine small schools located in one building. Each small school is a separate entity, with its own administrator, teachers, streetworkers and approximately 150 students. Each occupies a particular portion of the building, which has the required number of classrooms and a room for informal use by both students and staff. According to school officials, a student chooses the specific mini-school within the complex that reflects his or her interests, i.e., aerospace, automotive, business, College Bound, a cooperative work study program or English as a Second Language.

This mini-school complex is the only one of its kind in the City. It was established five years ago as a reaction to a period of great turmoil at the school, when, according to one staff member, it was "either pull it together or close the school."

An observation made during the unrest provided the genesis of the mini-complex idea: it was found that students in certain subject majors did not participate in the school riots. The staff found that the deciding factor was an identifiable quality in each of the departments that met a pupil's special interest and had a positive effect on student attitudes and achievement. Consequently, an attempt was made to capitalize on this by establishing more specialized units as mini-schools.

The principal met with representatives from the staff and student body during the spring of 1971 and plans for reorganization in the fall term were formulated. The Chancellor's approval was obtained; a private agency was contacted for guidance; and financial aid and professional expertise were

secured through efforts of the agency, of corporations and of foundations. This school is unzoned; its student body comes primarily from one borough but also includes pupils from other boroughs.

Analysis of Data Provided by Questionnaires

The mini-school complex has an all-male student population that is 46 percent black, 48 percent Hispanic, 1 percent Oriental, and 5 percent other -- none of whom are from the immediate neighborhood.

The percentage of attendance has increased from 54 percent in 1971 to 62 percent in 1974, although the enrollment has declined from 2,492 in 1971 to 1,800 in 1975.

The school has the fullest complement of supportive services of any school answering the CSS questionnaire: in addition to having on-the-premises staff, such as guidance personnel, psychiatrists, social workers, and streetworkers, the school makes greater use of services from outside agencies than do other responding schools.

It was reported in the responses to the questionnaire that three independent evaluations of the school were conducted (January 1972, June 1972, and May 1973), but that no changes were made on the basis of these findings. The school has not established a procedure for obtaining follow-up information from its graduates for the purpose of assessing the program.

Of 88 teachers reported on staff, only 10 returned the Teacher Profile Questionnaire, the smallest return from any school.* Consequently, it is virtually impossible to draw conclusions about characteristics of the staff.

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*This contrasts with 75 responses from a total of 85 staff members assigned to the other mini-schools contacted; and 136 responses from a total staff of 197 in the optional high schools.

Observations

The CSS representatives visited the school on three separate occasions and were impressed with several of the teachers and streetworkers who appeared to be dedicated and working to provide meaningful educational experiences for their students. The principal met with the CSS visitors on the first occasion for a very brief period but was thereafter unavailable for follow-up information, even by telephone.

Despite the commitment of some of the staff, a depressing atmosphere prevailed in the school. The long halls of the old building were badly in need of painting and were dimly lit. Most of the classes were observed only from the hallways because visitors were not permitted to enter. The explanation given was that the teachers were "uptight about strangers" observing their classes; a recent severe reduction in staff made them fearful of losing their jobs. Through the windows of the classroom doors, observers were able to note that many students and teachers appeared bored. The students, most of whom had traveled considerable distances to be there, sat impassively staring out of windows, hats and coats on, as if ready to leave at a moment's notice. A few teachers, however, did take time to explain their programs to CSS visitors and describe the changes they had initiated.

Streetworkers who are presently assigned to the building seem to have established the rapport with the students that their role was designed to assure. Previously, the streetworkers had worked primarily in the neighborhoods where pupils lived, with families, the courts and attendance officers. Now they are required to spend most of their time within the school building, where teachers and administrators tend to view them as security guards, a role which they strongly object to because they believe it reduces their effectiveness.

Conclusion

The organization of the mini-school complex, i.e. several small schools operating as separate entities under one roof, would appear to be a feasible plan for utilizing the existing high school structures in the City. However, this school seems to lack other factors necessary for a successful educational program. Equipment used for instruction in vocational classes, such as automotive trades, is admittedly obsolete. There did not seem to be a high level of morale nor a high degree of interaction between students and teachers. Innovative approaches to teaching that could produce increased motivation towards learning were not apparent. Nor did there seem to be, in the school as a whole, that quality of belonging and sense of community that was observed in other schools.

MINI-SCHOOLS

The largest number of alternative schools are of the mini-school type. These are administratively attached to larger schools, either as separate components within the same building or as annexes, and several have evolved out of a crisis within their respective schools.* The Committee visited six mini-schools and observed both school-within-a-school and annex operations.

School Hours

The length of school day and the time at which classes are held are factors which distinguish the alternative school from the traditional. Three of the six mini-schools that CSS visited dismissed their students at noon. Replies to the questionnaires revealed a wide diversity in school hours. Of the thirteen mini-schools, three, as noted, had half-day sessions; three operated on a full day schedule; one was on an abbreviated full day because of split sessions; two scheduled students for three-fourths of the day with the remainder of the day spent either at the main school or in independent study and there were a variety of other arrangements.

Teachers

The most outstanding characteristic of the mini-schools, in the view of the CSS visitors, was the positive relationship between the students and teachers.

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*Of the 19 responding schools, 13 categorized themselves as mini-schools. Five of the 13 stated that the school evolved as a result of crisis; four gave reasons such as, "outgrowth of discovery of a need...," "idea of the assistant principal in charge of guidance," "large numbers of dropouts with high reading scores." The remaining four attributed the establishment of the mini-school to a project of the Board of Education set forth in a document prepared by the Task Force on High School Redesign and the Chancellor's Center for Planning, entitled "Towards the 21st Century."

In many instances the teachers had been the initiators of the mini-schools. For the student "turned off" by an impersonal system, the establishment of the mini-school with a smaller pupil-teacher ratio and informal setting may have been the first tangible evidence that someone cared. In conversations with students, the feeling that, "The teachers really care for you here," was expressed repeatedly. This positive relationship was also reflected in the responses to Question III, 4 in the "Profiles of Teachers in Alternative High Schools": "Do you have different feelings about your present students as opposed to students you were formerly responsible for? If yes, why?" Without exception the teachers in the mini-schools responded that they knew their students better and their comments reflected their feelings:

> In this setting there is less friction and more human contact.
>
> I feel considerably more responsible for our mini-school students because it is inevitable that we become more involved with their life situations and their needs.
>
> I spend three times as much time with present students in more kinds of activities.
>
> I don't have different feelings: I just feel that because the school is smaller, and because I have taught many students for more than one term, I just know them better and have a closer relationship with many.
>
> I know them as people. They are total human beings.
>
> I know my students more intimately and am able to truly interact with them and also deal with them more effectively.
>
> I see more of them and talk with them more often about subjects which are important to them.
>
> There is a closer, more intimate relationship between teachers and students here. It is one of the sustaining factors in a situation which has the potential to be overwhelmingly demanding.
>
> I know them better; I am therefore better able to help them maximize their strengths and help them correct deficiencies in learning and personality development.

The generally accepted impression that alternative school teachers are young and inexperienced is not borne out by the data obtained from 75 responding mini-school teachers:

TABLE 3

TEACHER PROFILE - BY AGE GROUP

Age Group	No. of Teachers	Percentage of Total
30 and under	26	35
31 - 40	32	42
41 and over	17	23
		100 (n=75)

TABLE 4

TEACHER PROFILE - BY EXPERIENCE

Years in Teaching	No. of Teachers	Percentage of Total
1	1	1
2	3	4
3	2	3
4	3	4
5	8	11
6 - 10	36	48
11 - 15	10	13
16 - 20	7	9
21 and over	5	7
		100 (n=75)

Using three years as the measure of an experienced teacher (it was commonly the number of years required to attain tenure), only 8 percent of these teachers could be considered inexperienced. The percentage of teachers in this group under the age of 30 is 35 percent. The tables show that older, experienced personnel are in the majority in the mini-schools.

Contrary to the belief of some school critics that experienced, older teachers are inflexible, unimaginative and uncaring, the individual responses to Question II.3 of the teacher profile questionnaire, "Did you choose to work in an alternative school? If yes, why?", reflect something quite different. Following are six typical responses of teachers who had been teaching from nine to thirty-seven years:

> Not enough being done for student with potential who would probably drop out.
>
> Enjoyed making up and using my own curriculum based on needs of the students.
>
> Felt that I had something to contribute based on my past experience.
>
> Desire to work more effectively with students - be free of bureaucratic hindrances.
>
> It seemed like a very direct way of helping students achieve specific goals.
>
> Believe in choices of approach.

Of the 75 responding teachers, only eight had been assigned to the mini-school; the others had volunteered. Of the eight, six stated that they preferred to remain in the mini-school and were positive in their comments about the school. Among the reasons given for this preference were the desire to develop new curriculum, to attempt new approaches to teaching, to enjoy academic freedom and to establish rapport with their students. This rapport was readily discernible in the schools visited. The Community Service Society team noted the easy, informal atmosphere at each school and the obvious mutual respect that existed between the students and their teachers.

Ethnic Distribution of Students

One of the original concerns of CSS was whether alternative schools (particularly mini-schools which constitute a small part of a larger school) furthered segregation of the student body. As noted earlier, this concern was also expressed in the report of the National Commission on the Reform of Secondary Education.

CSS therefore requested an ethnic breakdown of the mini and main school enrollments. Significant differences would raise questions about the effect of the entire mini-school movement in New York City.

Following are two tables. One shows the actual enrollment of black, Hispanic, Oriental and other students in the responding mini-schools. The second table compares the percentages of these four groups in the mini-school with the percentages given for the main school of which they are a part.

No school is identified by name but is designated by a code, the first letter of which identifies the borough where the school is located (M for Manhattan, X for Bronx, K for Brooklyn and Q for Queens).

TABLE 5

1974 ETHNIC ENROLLMENT IN MINI-SCHOOLS

School Code	Total No. Students	Black	Hispanic	Oriental	Other
XA	95	52	42	1	0
XB	123	23	25	0	75
XC	85	23	62	0	0
XD	90	39	50	0	1
KE	71	11	2	0	58
MF	125	63	61	0	1
MG	66	45	19	0	2
MH	140	41	71	6	22
QI	74	10	4	2	58
QJ	75	61	0	0	14
Totals	944	368	336	9	231

NOTE: Three schools provided insufficient data to be included in the Ethnic Enrollment Tables.

TABLE 6

1974 ETHNIC ENROLLMENT BY PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION IN THE MAIN AND MINI-SCHOOLS

School Code	% Black		% Hispanic		% Oriental		% Other	
	Main	Mini	Main	Mini	Main	Mini	Main	Mini
XA	44	55	40	44	.8	-	15.0	1
XB	19	19	16	20	.4	-	65.0	61
XC	42	27	58	73	1.0	-	.3	-
XD	43	43	46	56	.5	-	10.0	2
KE	26	16	4	3	.6	-	69.0	81
MF	37	50	46	49	9.0	-	8.0	1
MG	52	67	39	30	2.0	-	7.0	3
MH	26	29	39	51	17.0	4	18.0	16
QI	12	14	6	5	5.0	2	80.0	79
*QJ	55	81	4	-	.3	-	41.0	19

*While there is a heavy concentration of minority enrollment in this mini-school, students also attend classes in the main school in the afternoon session.

Six of the ten responding mini-schools had a higher percentage of blacks than were enrolled in the main school; two had the same ratio; and two had a lower percentage than the main schools.

Six mini-schools had higher ratios of Hispanic students than the main school; three had a lower ratio. One school which had a low enrollment of Hispanic students in the main school had none in the mini-school. In one mini-school in Manhattan, where the Oriental population in the main school was 17 percent, the mini-school had 4 percent enrolled. By and large there are few Orientals in mini-schools.

One mini-school had a greater proportion of students in the "other" (term used for other than minority) category than were enrolled at the main school.

On the basis of the information received from these ten mini-schools, the majority appear slightly more segregated than the main schools of which they are a part. However, CSS visited one of the three mini-schools which did not respond to the questionnaire, a school located in Queens, and discovered that the

enrollment was at least 90 percent black and Hispanic while the main school enrollment was 44 percent black and Hispanic, 2 percent Oriental and 53 percent "other." It is unknown whether this condition prevails at any of the other schools which did not respond.

Improved Attendance

The table below shows that only one of nine responding mini-schools has an attendance rate which approaches the low rate of 45 percent in some urban schools as reported by the National Commission on the Reform of Secondary Education. Three mini-schools have approximately the same attendance rate as their main schools. Moreover, the attendance rate at two mini-schools equals or exceeds the citywide average of 77 percent.

TABLE 7

COMPARISON OF PERCENTAGE OF AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE (ADA) AT MINI-SCHOOLS AND MAIN SCHOOLS

School Code	ADA by % at Mini-School	ADA by % at Main School
XA	52	67
XB	64	76
XC	56	66
XD	67	70
KE	81	82
MF	70	70
MH	62	73
QI	77	82
KK	43	85

When analyzing the attendance figures in the mini-schools, it must be kept in mind that many of these students had been the truants and cutters in the main schools. Of the nine responding schools, six listed truancy and cutting as major reasons for referral.

To gain some insight about the motivation for improved attendance, the CSS visitors spoke with students in each of the mini-schools and observed them in

classroom and informal activities. In explaining their preference for the mini-school over the main school, most of the students spoke highly of their teachers and said that in the mini-school they were treated more as individuals. A typical comment was: "People know you here...you are a person and they care." Teachers also commented positively on the opportunity to know their students better and to meet individual needs.

Problems

The small size of the schools places limitations on course offerings, physical facilities and other services. However, the small size of the enrollment in the mini-schools and the higher teacher-to-student ratio seemed, according to our findings, to be among the most significant factors in establishing positive interpersonal relationships. The pupil population of responding mini-schools ranged in size from 66 to 190. Such a small number of students lends itself to a sense of community or family, and it is easier in such a situation for the students to know each other and their teachers better.

Despite this apparent advantage, the mini-school is in a more vulnerable position during periods of budget crisis because it is not a mandated "department" like English, math or social studies. CSS heard fear expressed that it might be the first department to lose staff positions.

The mini-schools were often found to be in makeshift quarters. CSS visited mini-schools located in school basements, in temporary buildings, in obsolete buildings, etc. Some of these locations did not provide a good learning environment. The directors of the mini-schools also spoke of being hampered by lack of supplies, administrative support from the main school and support services of social workers and guidance personnel.

The staff and students of three mini-schools mentioned that some of the teachers in the main school had negative attitudes toward the mini-school students. They said that the mini-school students were often referred to in deprecating

terms and became convenient targets of blame for incidents within the main schools. In one school (an annex) the antagonism between the two schools was alluded to frequently. Often an atmosphere of isolation seemed to prevail in the mini-schools. As a result, even though the mini-school was a part of the main school, mini-school students did not have access to the facilities and resources of the main school, such as shop classes, gyms, library and the wider variety of course offerings.

However, this "separateness" was less apparent at one school visited because discussions between the staffs of the mini- and main school had created a better understanding of the programs and goals of the mini-school and facilitated the participation of their students in some of the main school programs.

Conclusion

Despite obstacles, the mini-schools have succeeded in reaching and motivating students who previously had participated very little in school activities, but they have involved a small percentage of the total school population. The relationship between the mini-school and the parent school presents a problem which must be resolved if the students in the alternative school are to receive maximum benefit.

EXPERIMENTAL ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS

Responses to the CSS questionnaires were received from five of the experimental alternative schools, two of which were visited and will be described in greater detail later on in this report.

The experimental alternative schools (those run independently of any other school) have only been in existence for three to six years and they vary as greatly as do the mini-schools. Two of the responding schools are non-graded; the other three have grades nine through twelve. In three of them the directors (principals) were chosen by a community selection process. Two schools were the result of community planning; two were initiated by the Central Board of Education; and one was reported to have been established to meet "a need for disruptive and disaffected students." In four, the enrollment has risen 150 to 200 percent over its initial size.

All schools stated that their program enabled students to meet college requirements and to gain work skills. In all five schools students were involved in formulating school rules. In four, students were involved in curriculum planning, and in two, students were involved in the selection of teachers.

The involvement and use of community and business resources was impressive. All five schools stated that they were utilizing the business community as learning/training centers; four also used public service organizations for the same purpose. The school using only business resources was located in the heart of the City's financial district.

The responses of all five schools to the question about follow-up information on graduates indicated that the schools had developed a feedback system.

The largest of these schools reported that it held its first graduation in 1972 and that "most (of its graduates) are still in college. Approximately 85-90 percent of our graduates go on to an institution of higher learning."

The school which was described as having been established for "disruptive and disaffected students" replied that it had only six graduates in 1973, of whom four were enrolled in college. In 1974, 32 students graduated; half were enrolled in college. This school and one other noted that program changes had been made as a result of the feedback from graduates. In both instances the changes were instituted to strengthen writing skills.

Teachers

By and large, teachers in the experimental alternative high schools expressed very positive attitudes, as reflected in the following responses to Question IV of the teacher profile questionnaire, "Do you intend to remain in the alternative school? If yes, why?":

> The freedom involved with the creation of new courses and the student-teacher interaction would be missing (elsewhere).
>
> I love it. I feel very close to my students. I love what I am teaching. I feel I am doing an important job in this school.
>
> More possibility for creative solutions even though problems still exist. Real interest among staff and administration to seek solutions.
>
> Better opportunity to teach - to see results and develop new programs.
>
> The last six years have been the most fulfilling in my educational career.
>
> It has so much more to offer the students than does a traditional school. It is educationally exciting.
>
> The school has a healthy atmosphere and learning is taking place. I have a very good relationship with students and staff.
>
> It offers alternatives to a wider range of pupil needs, reducing frustration.

Similarly, in their answers to the question, "If you were a parent, would you send your child to this school?", 109 of 140 responding teachers replied affirmatively; 17 said no; 10 were undecided and 4 did not respond.

As in the mini-schools, the majority of the teachers (60 percent) were in the over-31 age group and had extensive teaching experience. Sixty-five percent had been teaching six or more years.

Observations

Two of the five experimental schools that responded to the questionnaire were visited. One school administrator was of the opinion that his school did not fall into the category of alternative schools, as that term is commonly applied in New York City. The school is located on a sprawling campus and has a large enrollment. However, it was the view of CSS that several organizational factors placed it properly within the context of alternative education. While the school is much larger than the mini-school type of alternative school, its very size demonstrates that alternative education can be provided in large urban high schools. It can serve as a model for future change.

The second experimental school observed was in a very different setting. It was an inner-city school, occupying rented quarters while new facilities were being constructed.

On the surface there would seem to be no basis for comparison, but in fact, the two schools had several characteristics in common: they were large compared to most other alternative schools; they were not initiated in response to a crisis situation within an existing school; an underlying philosophy guided their planning; the programming and scheduling were flexible and attributable in some degree to longer school hours; their current chief administrators had been involved in planning for the schools; and students elected to attend these schools (rather than having been assigned).

Enrollment at one school was 2,750; at the other, 439. The larger enrollment is comparable to that of large academic high schools in the City (which vary in enrollment from 1,545 to 6,249).* The enrollment figure of 439 seems small when compared to the large high schools, but not when compared to the average enrollment of 160 in other alternative schools. The director of the smaller school stated that her school could be run just as effectively with 2,000 - 3,000 students.

The larger school was the result of intensive planning, initiated by the Board of Education, and involved their administrative personnel, high school principals, teachers, parent groups, the State Education Department, colleges and others. The experimental characteristics of the school were built into its organization from the outset.

This school offered an impressive variety of courses and programs, with extracurricular activities forming an integral part of the school day. The usual grading system had been eliminated in favor of an ungraded "mastery" approach. The student selects courses (which must include those meeting Board of Education requirements for a high school diploma), and performance is assessed as follows:

M - Mastery - indicating sufficient mastery to move into the next phase of work.

R - Retention - indicating need to repeat the course due to a failure to achieve mastery.

MI - Mastery in Independent Study - indicating mastery in a specially designed program.

MC - Mastery with Condition - indicating marginal mastery with specific areas of weakness.

One of the premises implied in this system, and specifically stated in the goals of the school, is that programs should be designed to enable students to learn at their own rate and in accordance with their interests, capabilities

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*Census figures 1973

and potential. The emphasis is clearly on mastery and learning rather than grades per se.

The planning for the smaller, inner-city school was precipitated by community concern about a Board of Education proposal for a traditional high school in its area. The community demanded to be involved in the planning. As a result of long and arduous planning sessions involving parents, educators and representatives of community groups, this "alternative" school was established and operates under the joint control of the Board of Education and a community committee. The inner-city school is career-oriented. Several of its programs are linked directly with local businesses, hospitals, and agencies where students can, if they choose, receive on-the-job training as a complement to the academic preparation they receive at school. Classes are designed to meet the individual needs of students. Innovative approaches to basic required subjects have been instituted, including environmental studies related to science, a mathematics laboratory, cultural programs including exhibition planning, and field internships in occupational education. According to information provided by the administrator, 80 to 85 percent of the graduates have been accepted by and are attending colleges and universities (many receiving scholarships). Students are screened for admission to the school by a committee composed of peers and staff. They interview applicants and attempt to assess motivation, responsibility and self-direction, which are the main criteria for acceptance. The school stresses the importance of self-direction and expects students to be able to set standards for themselves.

Responses from both schools to a question about student involvement within the formal structure of the school indicated that students participated in decision-making. The students in the inner-city school were involved in curriculum planning, teacher selection and establishing rules and regulations. The campus-type school does not permit the students to select teachers but does include them in the curriculum planning and in establishing rules and regulations.

Student Programming

Both schools have flexible program scheduling in order to provide all students with an opportunity to choose from a wide variety of courses. Even in the basic required subjects, various options are provided in lieu of the traditional sequence of courses, i.e., English I, II, III and IV.

The larger school uses modular scheduling (20-minute time periods - or modules). Courses can be programmed to meet for one, two, three or four consecutive modules. The school year is divided into five seven-week cycles. It is operated on an eight-hour daily schedule (8:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M.). An average of 25 percent of student time is scheduled for independent study. Students are heterogeneously grouped.

The smaller school, responding to different needs, is open from 8:30 A.M. to 9:30 P.M., providing an opportunity for working students to attend. Adults also attend the school in order to obtain their high school diplomas. They participate in the same classes as the younger students, which adds to the "real life" quality of the school.

The CSS team was impressed by the quality of professional leadership displayed by the principals of both schools and by their strong commitment to the goals of the programs at their schools.

The two schools differed in size, buildings, grounds, and programs. Furthermore, the student population of each varied in composition, as shown in the following table:

	Black	Hispanic	Oriental	Other	9th Grade Mean Reading Scores 1975	% to College	Attendance % as of March 1975
campus-type	25%	9%	1%	65%	10.6	85-90	87.50
inner-city	33%	55%	less than 1%	11%	6.2	80-85	82.99

NOTE: Data compiled from responses of these schools to CSS questionnaire and Board of Education reports: HIGH SCHOOL MEAN & MEDIAN READING TEST - 1975 - GRADE 9; PERCENTAGES OF ATTENDANCE - 7th PERIOD, March 3-26, 1975.

Although the age range of the students, the ethnic mix, and the level of prior academic preparation (as evidenced by the mean reading scores of entering freshmen) differ widely in these two schools, it should be noted that the attendance rates and the percentages of those going on to college are very similar.

Conclusion

Our observations would suggest that these measures of success might be attributable to several common factors: high motivation and self-reliance of the student body, strong leadership of the chief administrators, exceptional involvement of carefully selected staff in realization of well defined goals, and a flexible and individualized program structured to meet these goals.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Board of Education Proposal

While CSS was conducting its survey, other studies were also in progress. An April 1975 proposal, prepared for the High School Division of the Board of Education by Fillmore Peltz and Noel Kriftcher, entitled The Independent Alternative High Schools, states:

> The recommendations which follow emerge from a position of advocacy for alternative forms of high school education and are consistent with the Division's expressed intent to provide many viable educational options. These recommendations are designed to refine the existing model of alternative education in New York City so that current and future alternative structures throughout the nation may look to us for leadership in the development of educational options...The intent of these proposals is to superimpose a responsive serviceable structure which will provide guidance and leadership for all independent alternative high schools.[8] (Emphasis ours.)

While the proposal seems to advocate alternative education, its recommendation for a superstructure is troubling. The new layer of bureaucracy which is recommended is described as follows:

> Independent alternative high schools would profit greatly from the expertise provided by skilled subject area supervisors. It is recommended that four subject area supervisors be assigned at the rank of Assistant Principal (Supervision), one in each of the following disciplines: English and social studies, mathematics and science, business subjects and career education, and health and physical education...A designee of the Office of ACCESS Programs is to serve as the Executive Assistant to the Superintendents in matters concerning the Independent Alternative High Schools, exerting such "line authority" as is specifically delegated by the individual Superintendent.[9]

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[8]Fillmore Peltz and Noel Kriftcher, New York City Board of Education, "The Independent Alternative High Schools," April 14, 1975, pp. 1-2.

[9]Ibid., pp. 10, 12.

Such a bureaucracy could effectively destroy the spirit and flexibility of the alternative schools. As Mike Hickey, in Changing Schools, states:

> The question of whether a public education system can tolerate--let alone support--alternative education programs without compromising the concept of "alternativeness" is a valid one. The basis of an effective bureaucracy is structure and systems, yet these are antithetical to the basis of alternative education. Yet the advantage of affiliation is more than merely financial support. It is a symbiotic relationship that, given mutual honesty and effort by both parties, can be a major vehicle for change in the public education system.[10]

The Peltz-Kriftcher proposal also recommends that, within a year, all alternative schools with less than 200 students be eliminated (which would eliminate most of the mini-schools).

Fiscal Crisis

The future of alternative schools is also threatened by the City's current severe fiscal crisis. Budget cuts have already resulted in severe reduction and reassignment of the specially selected staff. There is concern that the budget crisis may be used to precipitate the termination of some alternative schools.

Legislation

In the past several years bills have been introduced in the New York State Legislature proposing "alternative schools" for disruptive pupils. One, introduced in 1973, would have amended Section 3214 of the State Education Law relating to schools for delinquents. This legislation would have extended the time limit for which a pupil could be suspended from school by a principal for insubordination, disorderliness or bad conduct, and would have required "alternative" instruction after one suspension, and placement in a "satellite center" providing alternate education after a second suspension.

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[10] Mike Hickey, "Alternative Education and Public Schools: Is Peaceful Cohabitation Possible?", Changing Schools, No. 003, Bloomington, Indiana: School of Education, Indiana University.

Another bill, amending the same section of law, would have permitted any Community School Board in New York City to "establish in its school district an alternative school or schools for the instruction of those students who have been determined to be 'disruptive students.'"

CSS has opposed such legislation, basically for the reason that it represents unconstitutional denial of due process to pupils, in contravention of United States Supreme Court rulings on students' rights which require provision of a fair hearing. Moreover, as noted in a CSS Legislative Memorandum:

> As described in this amendment, alternative instruction and satellite centers are conceived as punishment...
>
> The Committee views alternative schools and programs as representing a progressive acknowledgment of the need to provide diverse educational opportunities for high school youth whose educational experience and achievement are enhanced in a less traditional learning environment.
>
> This bill would place a stigma on all pupils presently attending alternative schools.[11]

While such legislative efforts have been unsuccessful, they demonstrate that the term "alternative schools" in New York City (the legislators who introduced these bills are from this city) has a negative connotation, contrary to a national view of alternative schools as a promising development in school reform designed to meet the differing needs of a changing school population.

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[11]Community Service Society of New York, Legislative Memorandum, Committee on Education, No. 11, March 14, 1974.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings of Study

From the observations made at the schools and the analysis of available data in this informal exploration of alternative high schools in New York City, it appears that the providing of alternatives serves a valid purpose and affords a valuable experience for students.

While the schools vary widely in goals, organizational structure and programming, they do have some common elements:

- a freedom from bureaucratic restrictions
- an emphasis on individual development
- extensive use of outside resources to enrich the learning experience
- a high degree of student satisfaction which is attributable to a closer student-teacher relationship, a spirit of belonging, even for students who had been truants and potential dropouts, and an increased sense of self-worth. A much repeated theme was that "someone cares."
- an opportunity for teachers to experiment and develop curriculum tailored to the needs and interests of the students. Teachers enjoyed a rewarding professional experience due to their participation in the development and implementation of the program.

However, CSS found in its survey that factual data about changes in achievement levels and follow-up information on the occupational or educational advancement of graduates were sorely lacking in all but a few instances. For this reason, and because there was less than a 50 percent response to the questionnaire, only tentative judgments could be made about the effectiveness of most of the schools in the study and no projections could be made.

There was also some evidence of segregation and of the use of alternative programs merely to divert "unwanted" students from the regular schools.

In general, CSS concludes that alternative forms of education provide a variety of learning environments in which students can develop socially and intellectually through greater responsiveness to their individual interests and needs than are provided in a traditional school. The involvement of students and faculty in the decision-making process in these schools generates considerable enthusiasm and enhances the self-image of the students.

The Need for Change

The increasing high school dropout rate which now exceeds 50 percent, the alarming increase in student suspensions, the high unemployment rate amongst teenagers, other symptoms of the disaffection of this age group and the lower academic achievement of high school graduates all point to the need for immediate change.

A metamorphosis in secondary education is long overdue. The high schools have a new and different role to perform; the students themselves have made this clear in unmistakable ways.

In 1971, the Board of Education of the City of New York, in establishing a Task Force on High School Redesign, stated that "the accelerated rate of change in society, school population and technology in recent years is such that we have recognized the need to step up the pace of curricular innovation and boldly move into new models for secondary education." The task force thereafter published a blueprint for change entitled "Toward the 21st Century" which precipitated the organization of many of the alternative schools in the City.

The successes achieved by some of these alternative high schools suggest immediate steps that can be taken in New York City to encourage youngsters to remain in high school, to make the schools more responsive to the population they serve, to provide a wide array of educational choices and to help students develop the ability and self-confidence to make choices.

Alternatives have proven to be both feasible and necessary; not only for the bright and talented, but for all those students who find it difficult to march to the lockstep of traditional secondary education. They have also proven that students are responsive to the setting of realistic standards with expectations of student effort and achievement.

This is an appropriate time for a reorganization to take place. The budget cuts and seniority rules have resulted, not only in layoffs, but in reassigning teachers from one school to another for purposes which are unrelated to education. The opportunity exists for more reasonable and reasoned assignment based on students' needs and choices and better utilization of teachers' talents.

CSS therefore Recommends

1. The Board of Education eliminate the use of feeder patterns and residence as criteria for high school assignment; and give all students the opportunity to select the high school

of their choice and the program they wish to pursue, consistent with State education and integration requirements.

2. The Board of Education insure that at the pre-high school level students are provided with guidance and all relevant material about the high school offerings in order to make an informed choice.

3. The Board of Education establish more small organizational units providing alternative programs, both within and apart from existing high schools. Each high school teacher could then be assigned a limited number of students to permit a closer student-teacher relationship. Every teacher should be responsible, not only for teaching the subject matter of his or her specialty, but for establishing the rapport with students which demonstrates to them that "somebody cares." There is evidence from the study that this can be done without additional teaching staff. Students in the alternative programs should have the opportunity to take advantage of the facilities, student activities and course offerings of the larger school and vice versa. Schools should be advised of their responsibility to make such provision.

4. Every high school should assess its program, and redesign, as necessary, for the purpose of attracting students to it by the type and quality of its program and services, as do specialized high schools, vocational high schools, institutes and colleges.

It should be emphasized that this does not imply a lowering of standards.

5. Each school should identify and use appropriate resources in the community. This includes involving business, health and social agencies, cultural and recreational centers and the particular talents of volunteers in planning and implementing programs. Off-school sites which are relevant to the course work should be utilized wherever possible.
6. High school students should be given the opportunity to participate in deliberations about curriculum and school regulations.
7. Schools should be tailored to meet student needs and interests, rather than continuing the frustrating and self-defeating effort of trying to tailor the students to the schools.
8. Further research should be undertaken to determine which factors were effective in the alternative schools and to what extent these had an impact on the personal development, educational achievement and aspirations of the students.

As stated in a position paper prepared by the National Consortium on Educational Alternatives:

> ...a primary rationale for the existence of alternatives within public education is that they become the means or the process

by which public education evolves. Realistically, some strategies for educational alternatives will not work. Evaluation provides a base for identifying those that work and those that don't. From those that don't, needed changes in the alternative program can be made. From those that do work, lessons can be learned which will eventually change the regular system.

First Steps towards Implementation

1. All eighth and ninth grade students should be given the opportunity to visit high schools which they might wish to attend -- in or out of their borough or neighborhood -- to facilitate their making informed choices. The same opportunity should be extended to parents. For this process to work, it is essential that mechanisms be employed and assistance given which would enable students who are impoverished, language- or culture-bound, and those who are least sophisticated to take full advantage of the options afforded.

For example, video-tapes of various high school programs, field trips, the use of the media to focus attention on these opportunities, distribution of high school directories and other means might be employed. Otherwise, the advantages of "open choice" will not be realized by the majority of the City's school children.

2. Junior high and intermediate school seniors should be permitted to list their first, second and third choices of high school and be given assurance of acceptance by one of their choices.

3. An inordinate number of applications to one school should precipitate an examination of reasons for the school's popularity and steps should be taken to accommodate the demand by replicating the desired aspects of the program in other existing schools.

4. Since experimental models have been in existence for several years, this would be a suitable time to establish workshops for exchanging information and plan for visits between high school staffs -- principals, teachers, guidance counselors and others -- so that experiences can be shared and the more successful programs and techniques replicated. Recognizing the cost of classroom coverage for such an endeavor, and in consideration of the present fiscal crisis, it is suggested that the Board of Education seek foundation grants or applicable Federal funds to underwrite this proposal.

BOARD OF EDUCATION
CITY OF NEW YORK

BUREAU OF
ATTENDANCE

PERCENTAGES OF ATTENDANCE -- BY SCHOOL DISTRICTS
7th PERIOD March 3-26, 1975 - Inclusive

MANHATTAN

%PER			
P.S.	PERCENT	P.S.	PERCENT
BFranklinX	49.65	Art&Des. V	87.88
CEHughes X	66.01	CenlCom V	86.10
GWashgtn X	71.76	Chelsea V	83.50
Haaren X	60.82	FashInd V	80.51
Mus&Art X	89.34	Food&Mar V	71.71
JRichmn X	72.81	MDBacon V	89.96
LBrandeisX	78.76	Manhtn V	74.39
SPark X	73.29	NYPrint V	78.18
Stuyvsnt X	93.29		
WIrving X	83.95		
MLKing X	80.18		

BRONX

%PER			
P.S.	PERCENT	P.S.	PERCENT
AStevnsnX	76.15	AESmith V	79.50
BxSci X	90.36	GDodge V	89.68
CColumbsX	81.39	JAddams V	78.84
DWClintnX	66.27	SGompers V	81.41
EChilds X	78.60		
JFKenndyX	79.43		
HLehman X	76.28		
JMonroe X	70.23		
Morris X	74.52		
TRoosvltX	70.72		
HTruman X	79.48		
Walton X	66.81		
WHTaft X	66.78		

BROOKLYN

%PER			
P.S.	PERCENT	P.S.	PERCENT
Bushwick X	79.05	AHamltn V	85.37
Canarsie X	77.96	CBarton V	89.86
Erasmus X	82.23	EastNY V	78.95
FDRoosvltX	77.29	WHMaxwllV	78.43
FKLane X	67.99		
GWingate X	77.95		
JMadison X	82.01		
JDewey X	87.50		
Midwood X	81.55		
NUtrecht X	78.30		
ProsHgts X	69.80		
SShore X	76.39		
STilden X	80.45		
ShpshdBayX	83.35		
TJeffrsn X	64.44		
ERMurrow X	87.97		

BROOKLYN - S.I.

%PER			
P.S.	PERCENT	P.S.	PERCENT
ALincln X	83.94	Automtve V	81.84
BayRidgeX	77.76	EWhitney V	85.35
Boys X	60.55	GWestnghseV	85.22
BkTech X	88.85	SJHale V	79.99
EDist X	67.18	WMGrady V	86.66
FtHamltnX	82.68	RMcKee V	81.03
JJay X	64.02		
Lafytte X	76.75		
Curtis X	84.51		
NDorp X	82.48		
PRichmd X	83.00		
SWagner X	80.72		
Totnvle X	82.78		

QUEENS

%PER			
P.S.	PERCENT	P.S.	PERCENT
AJackson X	83.40	SpfdGdnsX	83.38
AMartin X	91.00	WCBrynt X	80.93
Bayside X	84.08		
BChannel X	82.74		
BCardozo X	79.10		
FRockawayX	84.02	AviationV	92.78
Flushing X	81.78	Queens V	84.83
FHills X	86.46	TEdison V	91.81
FLewis X	83.06		
GClevlnd X	82.76		
Hllcrest X	82.10		
Jamaica X	90.11		
JAdams X	85.14		
JBowne X	82.73		
LICity X	88.74		
MVBuren X	86.56		
Newton X	87.54		
RHill X	82.51		

ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS

%PER			
P.S.	PERCENT	P.S.	PERCENT
Aux.Serv.	63.48	City-a-Schl	83.28
Harlem	53.15	PM High	43.62
Hrlm.Prep	39.62	Pacific	59.59
LES Prep.	71.03	Redirection	66.56
Park East	82.99	Satellite	81.65
WS High	57.99		
		MiddleCollege	75.73

X - Academic High Schools

V - Vocational High Schools

ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL QUESTIONNAIRE

School:_____

	YES	NO
1. How many years has the alternative school existed?_____.		
2. Organization:		
a. A mini-school within the main school	___	___
b. An annex	___	___
c. Independent of any other school	___	___
d. Other (describe)	___	___
3. Scheduling: (specify which of the following best describes your school)		
a. Half day in school, students dismissed	___	
b. Whole day in school	___	
c. Half day in school, half day field study	___	
d. Whole day in field study	___	
e. Other_____ _____		
4. Grade structure:		
a. 9th	___	
b. 10th	___	
c. 11th	___	
d. 12th	___	
e. Are students readmitted to the mainstream prior to graduation?	___	___
5. Selection of director:		
a. Assignment	___	___
b. Volunteer	___	___
c. Community selection process	___	___
d. Selection by staff	___	___
e. Other (explain)_____ _____.		
6. Staff selection		
a. Assignment	___	___
b. Volunteer	___	___
c. Community selection process	___	___
d. Other (explain)_____ _____.		

7. Staff credentials:

	Total No.	Total number in each category HS	BA	MA	Phd	City Lic.	State Cert.
a. Director	____	—	—	—	—	—	____
b. Teachers	____	—	—	—	—	—	____
c. Paraprofessionals	____	—	—	—	—	—	____
d. Street-workers	____	—	—	—	—	—	____

8. Areas of specialization: Teaching license

No. of teachers with licenses in:		No. teaching in license
Art/Music	____	_____
English	____	_____
Foreign Language	____	_____
Guidance	____	_____
Health & Physical Ed.	____	_____
Math	____	_____
Reading	____	_____
Science	____	_____
Social Studies	____	_____
Other (designate)_____		
_____		

9. Current Funding:

	Amount
a. Tax levy	$_____
b. Federal funds - (specify category)_____	_____
c. Private foundations-	
i. Long term	_____
ii. Short term	_____
d. Community support	_____

	YES	NO
10. Is per pupil expenditure the same as that in the main school: If no:_____more_____less.	___	___
11. How did the alternative school evolve?		
a. Result of crisis in the main school	___	___
b. Community planning	___	___
c. Other (explain)_____		
_____.		

12. Attendance figures:

	Alternative School		Main School	
	Tot. Pop.	WADA*	Tot. Pop.	WADA
1971	_____	____	_____	____
1972	_____	____	_____	____
1973	_____	____	_____	____
1974	_____	____	_____	____

(*Weighted Average Daily Attendance)

13. Present population:
Total number of students _____
i. Total number of girls _____
ii. Total number of boys _____

14. Ethnic distribution (percentage)
a. Black _____ Boys _____ Girls _____
b. Hispanic _____ Boys _____ Girls _____
c. Oriental _____ Boys _____ Girls _____
d. Other _____ Boys _____ Girls _____

15. Student selection: (estimated % of total enrollment)
a. From main school _____
i. Voluntary _____
ii. Referred by deans _____
iii. Referred by guidance counselors _____
iv. Referred by attendance teachers _____
v. Peer recommendation _____
b. Referred from another school _____

16. Reasons for referral: (estimated % of total enrollment)
a. Excessive cutting _____
b. General truancy _____
c. Discipline problems _____
d. Underachievement _____
e. Inability to cope in main school _____
f. Other _____

17. What percentage of the students reside within:

a. The neighborhood. _____
b. The borough. _____
c. Other boroughs. _____

	YES	NO
18. Does the curriculum:		
a. Meet requirement for college entrance?	___	___
b. Provide career skills for job Market?	___	___

c. Other (specify) _____
_____

19. How does the curriculum of the alternative school differ from that of the main school?_____

_____

_____

	YES	NO
20. Do the students in the alternative school take any classes in the main school? If yes, specify subjects:_____	___	___
21. Do the students participate in the extracurricular activities in:		
a. The main school	___	___
b. The alternative school	___	___
c. Specify _____		
22. Do students participate in the decision making process of:		
a. Curriculum planning	___	___
b. Selection of teachers	___	___
c. Rules and regulations	___	___

23. Check which of the following services are provided:

	on premises	off premises
Guidance	___	___
Psychologists	___	___
Psychiatrists	___	___
Social Workers	___	___
Health Services	___	___
Other (please specify_____		

24. Specify which of the following agencies provide:

	Bd. of Ed	BCG	Other City Agencies	Private Agencies
Guidance	_____	___	_____	_____
Psychologists	_____	___	_____	_____
Psychiatrists	_____	___	_____	_____
Social Workers	_____	___	_____	_____
Health Services	_____	___	_____	_____
Other_____				

	YES	NO

25. Community involvement in school organization:
    a. Does the school utilize public service organizations (i.e. hospitals, etc.) as learning/training centers? ___ ___
        i. Within the immediate neighborhood? ___ ___
        ii. Within the borough? ___ ___
        iii. Within the city? ___ ___
        iv. Other?_____

    b. Does the school involve the business community as learning/training centers? ___ ___
        i. Within the immediate neighborhood? ___ ___
        ii. Within the borough? ___ ___
        iii. Within the city? ___ ___
        iv. Other?_____

    c. Are the local social groups within the community utilized (i.e. volunteer workers, tutoring, teaching, etc.)? ___ ___

26. Does the school have follow-up information about its graduates? ___ ___
    If yes, please complete the following in so far as is possible:

	Total	1971	1972	1973	1974
Total No. graduates					
Received technical training	___	___	___	___	___
Presently employed in technical positions:	___	___	___	___	___
Enrolled in college:	___	___	___	___	___
Graduated from college:	___	___	___	___	___

27. Has the school developed a feedback system among graduates? ___ ___
    a. Has the feedback system been utilized in order to re-evaluate the program? ___ ___
    b. Has the program been changed as a result? ___ ___
        If yes, in what way?_____
        _____.
    c. Are graduates able to cope outside the alternative school setting? ___ ___

28. Has the program had an outside evaluation? ___ ___
    What year? _____
    Have changes been made as a result? ___ ___
        Specify_____

29. What recommendations would you make for alternative schools?

PROFILES OF TEACHERS IN ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS

I. Personal

1. Age: 20-30____, 31-40____, 41 and over____.

2. Sex: Female____ Male_____.

3. Degrees held: B.A.____; M.A.____; Ph.D.____.

4. Years in teaching_____.

5. Years in main school____.

6. Years in alternative program_____.

	YES	NO

II. Teaching-related questions:

1. Subjects you are teaching_____ .
_____.

2. Style of teaching
   a. Lecture — —
   b. Discussion — —
   c. Student/teacher interactinn — —

3. Did you choose to work in the alternative school? — —
If yes, why?_____
_____.

4. Were you assigned to the alternative school? — —

5. How many hours a day do you teach? _____hours.

6. How many hours are spent in other teaching-related activities per day?_____hours.

7. Have you developed any new curricula in this program?__ __
If yes, please explain_____
_____.

III. Student-related questions:

1. How many students do you work with in the alternative school?_____students.

2. How does this number compare with the number in your previous position?_____
_____.

3. Do you know your students better in the alternative school? — —

		YES	NO
4.	Do you have different feelings about your present students as opposed to students you were formerly responsible for?	___	___
	If yes, why?_____		
	_____.		
5.	Do you have more contact with the parents of the students in the alternative school?	___	___
	Less contact?	___	___
IV.	Do you intend to remain in the alternative program, if possible?	___	___
	If yes, why?_____		
	_____.		
	If no, why?_____		
	_____.		
V.	If you were a parent, would you send your own child to this school?	___	___

March, 1975

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF HIGH SCHOOLS
110 LIVINGSTON STREET, BROOKLYN, N. Y. 11201

SAMUEL POLATNICK
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TELEPHONE: 596-6102

April 16, 1975

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Heads of Alternative Schools

FROM: Samuel Polatnick
Executive Director

RE: COMMUNITY SERVICE SOCIETY

* *

Community Service Society, an established and widely respected social service agency, is conducting a survey of the alternative public high schools in an attempt to analyze the programs, organizational structure, student selection process, and the effect these schools are having in motivating students with histories of non-attendance.

As we are all concerned with the rise in absenteeism in our schools, it would be beneficial to all of us to discover factors that might alter this pattern. For this reason, I recommend your cooperation in their project.

SP:kr

COMMUNITY SERVICE SOCIETY · 105 EAST 22 STREET · NEW YORK N.Y. 10010 · (212) 254-8900

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We are concerned, as is everyone, about the rise in the number of students who are dropping out, or just not attending school on a regular basis. From what information we have been able to obtain, through visits to selected schools and the rather limited amount of literature in the field, alternative schools have tried to address themselves to this serious problem. Consequently, we are currently involved in a study of the public alternative high schools in the city to discover what unique factors exist in the alternative schools that might be applicable and replicable to the regular high schools.

The enclosed questionnaires will, hopefully, provide us with information that when analyzed reveal successful patterns of organizational strategies. Please be assured that the report resulting from this study will not identify any school. We have also avoided requesting teachers' names in order to insure privacy.

We would be extremely appreciative if you could return this information as soon as possible. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Jo LoCicero Esther Johnson
Educational Consultants

Tel: 254-8900
Ext. 351
337